

2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT AREA

Stretching over 1,867 square miles (1,194,752 acres), Fremont County is bordered by Teton, Madison and Jefferson counties to the south and Clark County to the west. Over 11,859 people populate Fremont County, which is up from the 1990 census (Table 2). Fremont County is the largest potato seed producing area in the nation. In addition to the agricultural aspect of the economy, tourism (especially in Island Park) plays a large part in supporting the economy of the area. Bordering Wyoming and Montana, Island Park is located in close proximity to both Yellowstone National Park and the Continental Divide. Island Park hosts 200 subdivisions consisting of at least 50 homes in each, and the city's population is only 213. The vast majority of these structures are vacation homes. Within Island Park, the team devoted a large proportion of the total time spent to the subdivisions of Buffalo River, Elk Creek, Pinehaven and Sawtell.

Figure 1: Island Park Fire District Ownership and County Roads and Proposed Actions.

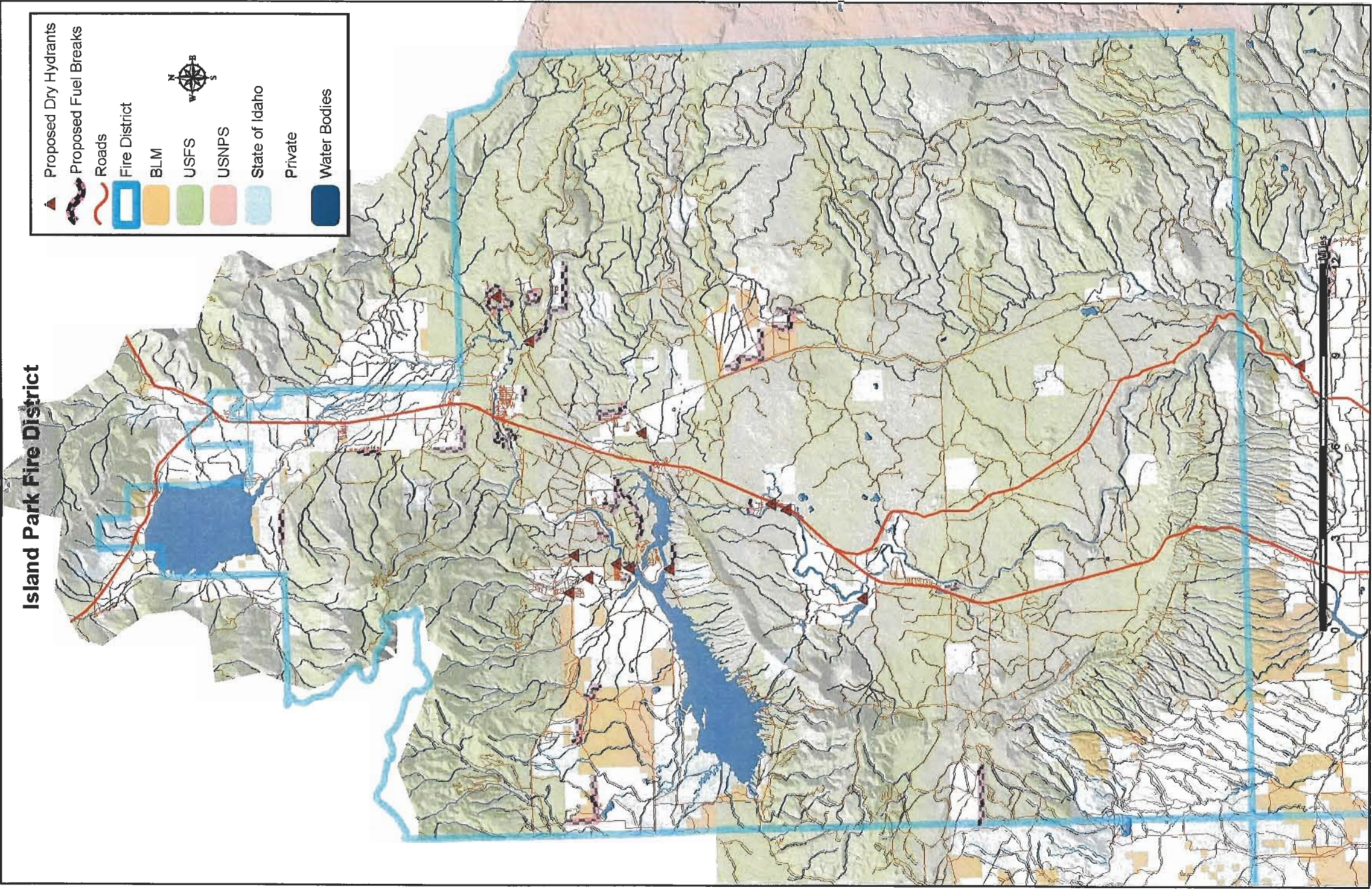


Figure 2: North Fremont Fire District Ownership and County Roads and Proposed Actions.

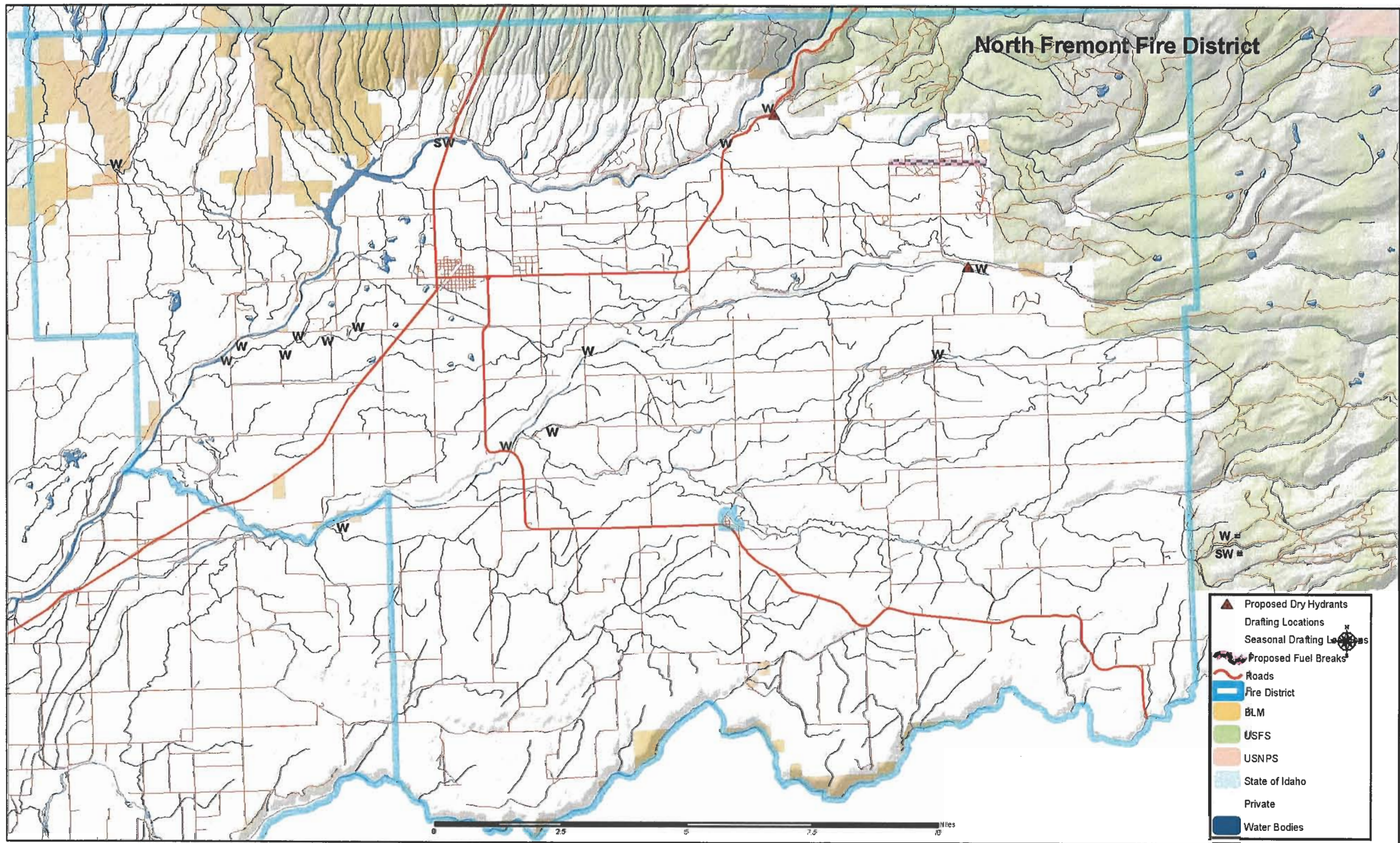
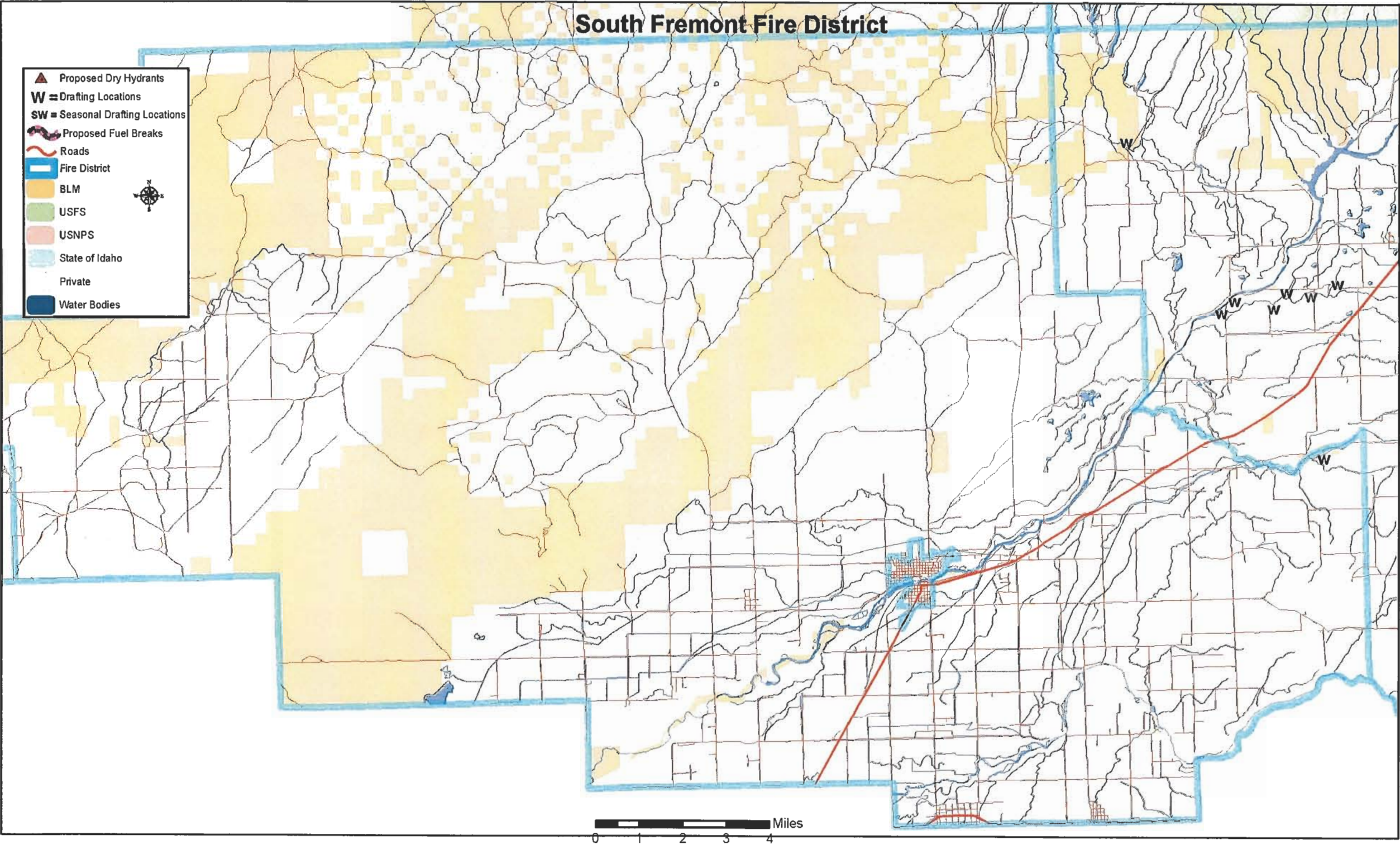


Figure 3: South Fremont Fire District Ownership and County Roads and Proposed Actions.



Population and Demographics

Table 2: Populations of Major Cities in Fremont County, Idaho.

Major Cities – Fremont County, Idaho	2002 Population Census
Ashton	1,109
Drummond	15
Island Park	213
Newdale	358
Parker	317
St. Anthony	3,312
Teton	571
Warm River	10
Balance of Fremont County	5,954
Fremont County	11,859

Landownership

Fremont County contains approximately 1,194,752 acres divided among six landowners (Table 3 and Figures 1, 2 and 3).

Table 3: Land Status of Fremont County, Idaho.

Owner	Acres	Percent
BLM	141,969	11.9
USFS	525,866	44.0
Other Federal	40,188	3.4
Private	370,316	31.0
State	115,827	9.7
City/County	586	0.05
TOTAL	1,194,752	100

Table 4: Land Use in Fremont County, Idaho.

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Urban Land	1,100	0.1%
Agricultural	210,200	17.2%
Rangeland	397,500	32.6%
Forest	547,900	44.9%
Water	19,200	1.6%
Barren Land	44,600	3.7%
TOTAL	1,220,500	100.0%

*U.S.G.S. land use/cover classification system. The water category and the rounding and estimating of satellite-based data usually results in slightly higher totals for land use.

Topography and Vegetation

Fremont County is located in southeastern Idaho. The majority of the private land (Table 3) has been developed for agricultural use (Table 4) where seed crops such as potatoes are produced. The public lands are primarily used for grazing and are undeveloped. The topography of Fremont County ranges in elevation from 4,849 feet below St. Anthony and along the Henry's Fork of the Snake River to 10,240 feet at the summit of Targhee Peak on the extreme north end of the county. Within this wide range of elevation are numerous plant species. The more common or dominant species of conifers, shrubs, grasses and forbs are listed below.

The dominant conifers are lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), Engelmann's spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), Douglas-fir (*Arceuthobium douglasii*) and whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*). Lodgepole pine is the most common conifer in the Yellowstone caldera and, during the late 1980s, the mountain pine beetle epidemic infiltrated this pine in Island Park, creating vast stands of dead trees. Although the mountain pine beetle is not currently an issue at the forefront of Targhee National Forest's concerns, it demonstrates that a forest dominated by one tree type is often more susceptible to stress and disease, leaving trees in optimal burning condition. Douglas-fir forests are mainly found in the Centennial and Henry's Lake mountain ranges. Seventy-nine percent of the Douglas-fir forested areas are mature forest; the Douglas-fir bark beetle is currently invading mature and stressed trees, producing more dead trees to serve as fuels. The dominant deciduous trees are quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) intermixed with some of the conifers and willow (*Salix* spp.) and cottonwood (*Populus* spp.) observed along the watercourses. The dominant shrub species are Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*), basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata tridentata*), mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata vaseyana*), silver sagebrush (*Artemisia cana*), antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), green rabbitbrush (*Ericameria teretifolia*), and shrubby cinquefoil (*Dasiphora* spp.).

The shrub understory consists of a variety of grasses and forbs. The most common native grasses include bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), thickspike wheatgrass (*Elymus macrourus*), western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), needle-and-thread grass (*Stipa comata*), and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Letterman's needlegrass (*Achnatherum lettermanii*), pinegrass (*Calamagrostis rubescens*), oniongrass (*Melica* spp.), Columbia needlegrass (*Achnatherum nelsonii*), prairie junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*), mountain brome (*Bromus marginatus*), Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*), slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*), and yellow wildrye (*Leymus flavescens*). Some of the more common native forbs include arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia repens*), western yarrow (*Achilles millefolium*), (*Hackelia* spp.), lupines (*Lupinus* spp.), milkvetches (*Astragalus* spp.), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos* spp.), sticky geranium (*Geranium viscosissimum*), common chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), lupine (*Lupinus* spp.), woods rose (*Rosa woodsii*), columbine (*Aquilegia* spp.), Bellflower (*Campanula* spp.), delphinium (*Delphinium* spp.), geranium (*Geranium* spp.), and penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.).

Figure 4: Island Park Fire District Land Cover Types.

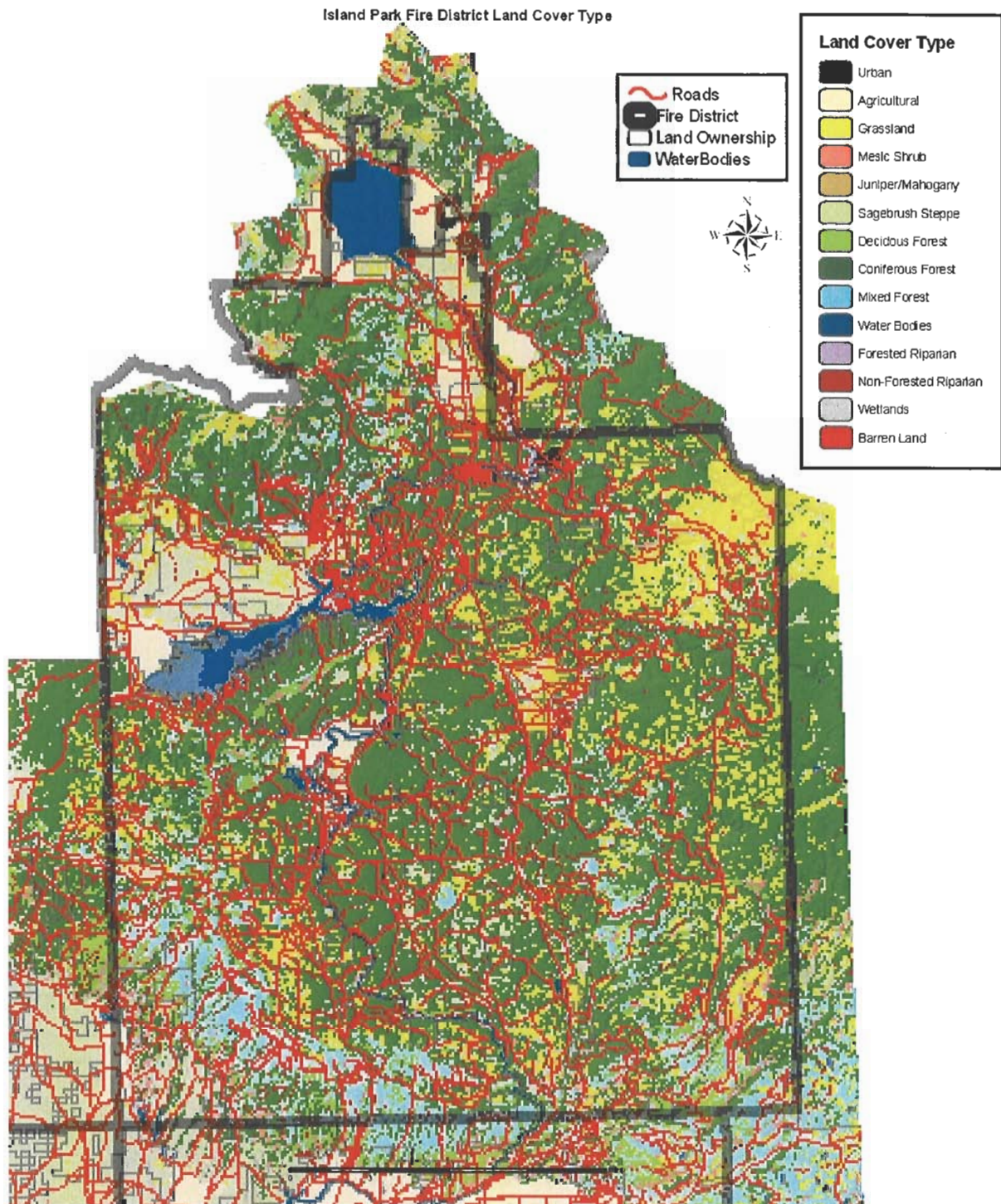


Figure 5: North Fremont Fire District Land Cover Types.

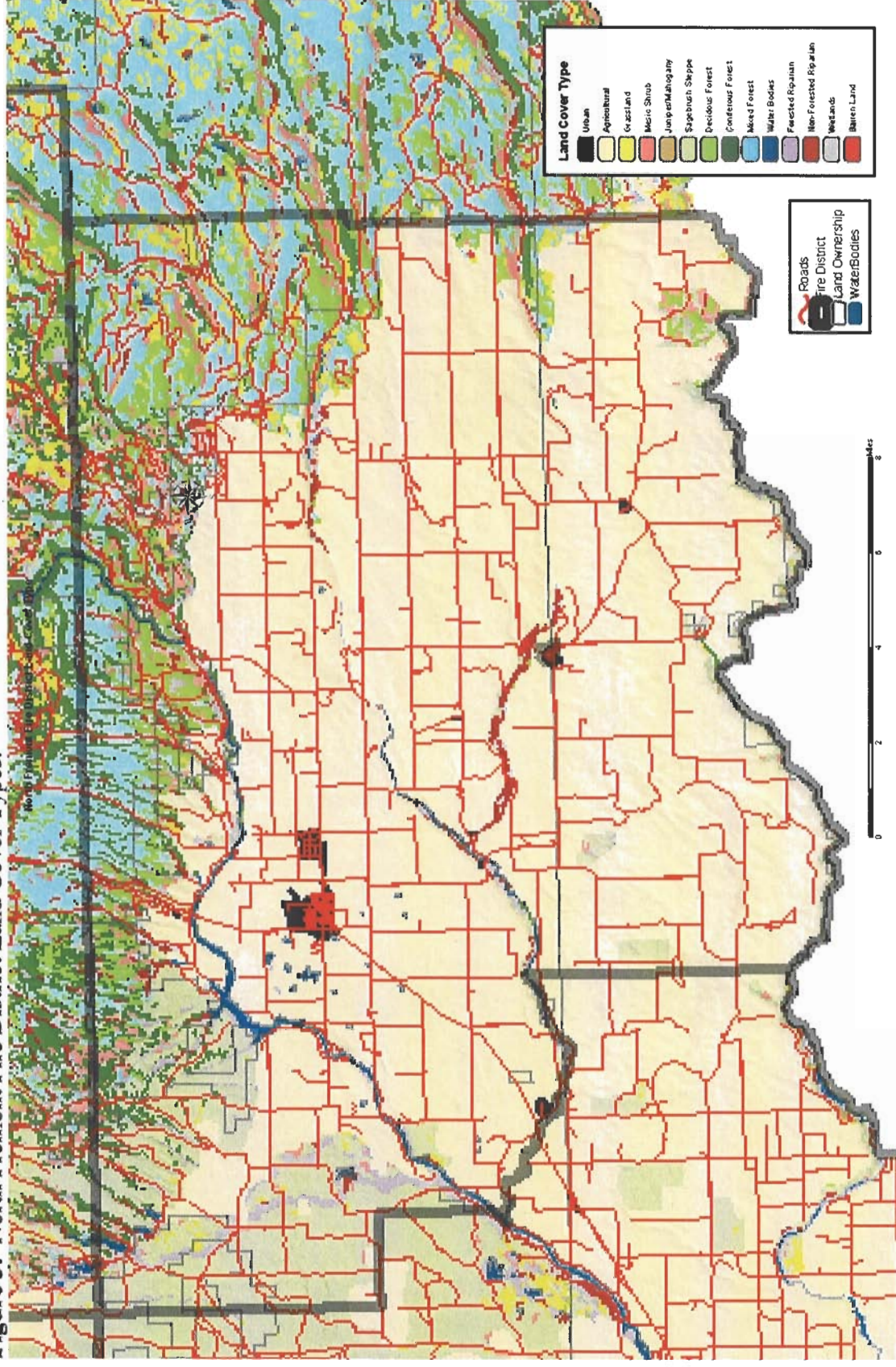
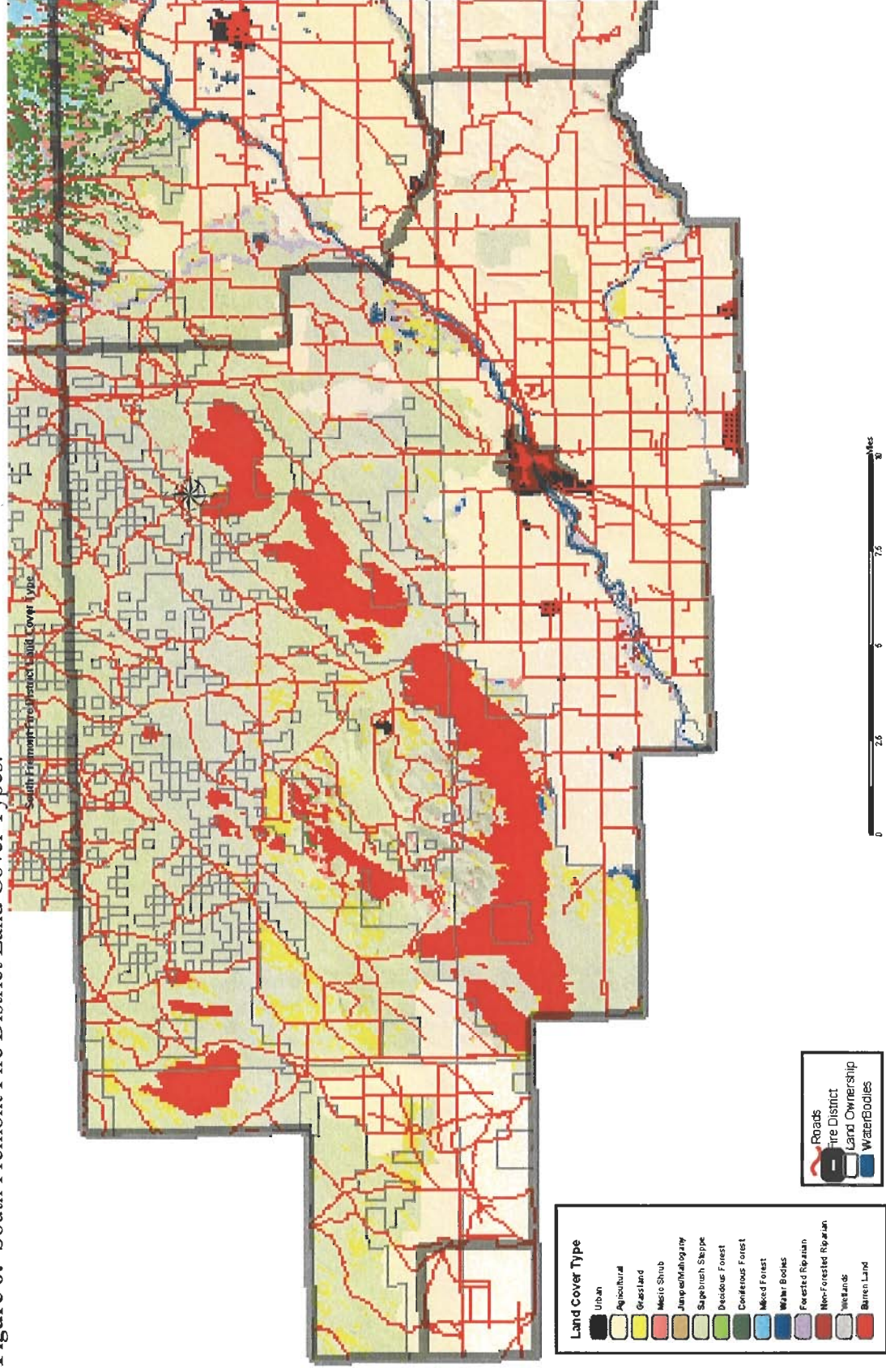


Figure 6: South Fremont Fire District Land Cover Types.



Climate

The range of temperature and weather patterns varies widely in Fremont County. Summer high temperatures average between 68° and 82° Fahrenheit (F), June through August. Winter temperatures can fall quite low and average between 3° to 13° F, December through February. Average yearly precipitation is 20.65 inches. Temperature averages range from 2.6° F in January to 82.5° F in July. In general the summer days are hot and the nights are cool. Precipitation during the summer months is limited to isolated showers and thunderstorms that produce localized precipitation in the Island Park area. St. Anthony and Ashton received little or no measurable precipitation June through August. Winter conditions usually arrive in mid-October. Snowfall is the primary source of precipitation for the county. Snow levels in the county vary between communities due to elevation.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 summarize long-term climatic data for St. Anthony, Island Park and Ashton, ID. Data from these weather stations provide a good cross-section of Fremont County's weather patterns.

Table 5: Monthly Climate Summary for St. Anthony, Idaho for years 1948 to 2003.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	28.7	33.8	42.5	55.5	66.3	74.2	83.4	82.5	72.7	60.3	42.1	30.6	56.0
Average Min. Temperature (F)	8.3	11.3	18.6	27.6	35.5	42.0	46.8	45.1	37.1	28.4	19.6	9.7	27.5
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	1.39	1.00	1.09	1.18	1.80	1.59	0.78	0.77	0.91	0.97	1.27	1.45	14.19
Average Total Snow Fall (in.)	12.8	8.5	3.2	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	4.2	12.6	42.8
Average Snow Depth (in.)	10	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	2

Percent of possible observations for period of record.

Max. Temp.: 98.1% Min. Temp.: 98.1% Precipitation: 97.3% Snowfall: 82.9% Snow Depth: 82.4%

Table 6: Monthly Climate Summary for Island Park, Idaho for years 1937 to 2003.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	26.2	31.5	38.2	48.2	59.8	68.9	78.8	78.6	68.7	55.0	37.0	27.5	51.5
Average Min. Temperature (F)	2.6	4.6	9.8	21.4	31.1	37.7	42.8	40.7	32.8	25.0	14.8	5.3	22.4
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	3.78	3.00	2.52	1.99	2.48	2.72	1.32	1.45	1.57	1.83	2.59	3.47	28.71
Average Total Snow Fall (in.)	47.6	36.9	28.7	12.8	4.1	0.4	0.0	0.1	1.1	6.4	24.5	46.6	209.3
Average Snow Depth (in.)	38	48	48	29	3	0	0	0	0	1	8	24	17

Percent of possible observations for period of record.

Max. Temp.: 95.1% Min. Temp.: 94.9% Precipitation: 94% Snowfall: 93.8% Snow Depth: 76.4%

Table 7: Monthly Climate Summary for Ashton, Idaho for years 1948 to 2003.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	28.0	33.4	40.4	53.3	65.0	73.2	81.8	80.8	71.4	58.9	40.4	29.7	54.7
Average Min. Temperature (F)	9.6	13.0	18.8	28.5	36.4	42.2	46.9	44.9	37.5	29.1	20.3	11.1	28.2
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	2.10	1.69	1.50	1.38	2.09	1.77	0.87	1.04	1.16	1.35	1.93	2.16	19.05
Average Total Snow Fall (in.)	22.1	15.4	10.9	4.2	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	2.4	13.2	22.3	92.0
Average Snow Depth (in.)	19	23	17	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	11	6

Percent of possible observations for period of record.

Max. Temp.: 97.2% Min. Temp.: 97.1% Precipitation: 96.8% Snowfall: 97.1% Snow Depth: 96.4%